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XXII. THE AUTHORSHIP OF HENRY THE EIGHTH

The problems connected with the authorship of *Henry the Eighth* are in some ways different from those usual in the doubtful plays. In the first place, the external evidence is singularly exact and definite and in no way contradictory. That a play dealing with the reign of Henry the Eighth and bearing either the title or the sub-title *All Is True* was being acted June 29, 1613 at the Globe Theatre is attested by at least three contemporary documents which tell of the fire which destroyed the theatre that day.¹ The publication of the play in the Folio of 1623 is, however, the only direct attribution to Shakespeare. According to one of the ballads written about the Globe fire, Heminge and Condell, the Folio editors, were both present at the time of the fire;² their later inclusion of the play in the Folio must, therefore, have been with full knowledge of its authorship. In the second place, the play is so evidently by two hands that, even as early as 1758, Roderick pointed out peculiarities of metre which did not seem to him Shakespearean.³ A chance remark of Tennyson's that 'many passages in *Henry the Eighth* were very much in the manner of Fletcher,' combined with his own impressions, led Spedding to investigate the matter more fully, with the result that in 1850 he published his paper, 'Who wrote Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth*?'⁴ As a result of this investigation and of the application of metrical tests, in the results of which his investigations were

¹ Wright, *Henry the Eighth* (Clarendon Press), p. vi; *The Annales, or Generall Chronicle of England, begun first by Mister John Stow continued unto the ende of this presente yeere* by Edmond Howes, 1615, p. 926; *Reliquiae Wottonianae* third edition, 1672, pp. 425, 426.

² Stanzas on 'the pittifull burning of the Globe playhouse in London' in *Gentlemen's Magazine*, 1816; reprinted in Halliwell-Phillipps, *Outlines* pp. 310-11.

³ Edwards, *Canons of Criticism*, 1758.

⁴ New Shakespeare Society's Transactions, 1874.

substantiated by those of Fleay, Furnivall and others, he concluded that more than one half of the play had been written by Fletcher, and pronounced as Shakespearean only the following scenes: Act I, Scenes 1 and 2; Act II, Scenes 3 and 4; Act III Scene 2 (to the exit of the king); Act V Scene 1—with alterations. With this decision, so far as the work of Fletcher is concerned, practically all later critics have been in agreement. The problem, then, has long been one not of the sole authorship of Shakespeare, but of his part in the play.

The most striking and most important contribution to the discussion, since that of Spedding, is the paper which Robert Boyle in 1885 read before the New Shakespere Society. In this he declared that Shakespeare had had no part in the writing of the play, but that it had been the joint work of Fletcher and of Massinger.⁵ Spedding and Boyle agreed, in the main, in regard to the Fletcherian scenes; both recognized, also, the lack of unity of conception and development and the feebleness and inconsistency of many of the characters. Boyle, however, based his contention in regard to Massinger on the grounds that at no time in his later period did Shakespeare collaborate with another dramatist and that no reason for such collaboration can be shown; that, even had collaboration been possible Shakespeare would hardly have allowed his work to be spoiled—as it certainly was—by an inferior dramatist; and that it was improbable that Fletcher, the lesser author, should have been given all the 'big scenes' as he undoubtedly was. From this Boyle goes on to prove that the play which we now have, which was included in the Folio of 1623 'was not written by Fletcher and Shakespeare, but by Fletcher and Massinger, to supply

⁵ The same conclusion has been reached by H. Dugdale Sykes in a paper, 'King Henry VIII,' published in his *Sidelights on Shakespeare* (Shakespeare Head press, Stratford-on-Avon 1919). He bases his conclusions entirely upon a comparative study of the diction of Massinger and the doubtful portions of the play.

the place of the lost Shakespeare play *All is True* destroyed in the Globe Theatre fire of 1613.⁶

Boyle's theory is a clear and forceful one which leaves his reader with the impression that, if the hypothesis be granted, the conclusion must follow. Further consideration, however, makes one aware that it is an arbitrarily assumed hypothesis which not only does not solve all the former problems, but which raises others, equally difficult. For example, the fact that his metrical tests result in assigning to Massinger not only all the so-called Shakespearean scenes, but even some parts which other critics unanimously agree in assigning to Fletcher would lead one to wonder if the style of Massinger was similar not only to that of Shakespeare but also to that of Fletcher. And when Boyle acknowledges that 'from the characteristics of metre alone it would be difficult to decide whether a particular passage or even play as written by Shakespeare or Massinger, so similar is the latter's style to Shakespeare's later dramas,'⁷ we may justly inquire: why, then, attribute it to Massinger at all in the face of the evidence which gives it to Shakespeare? There are, at all events, three points which Boyle's theory cannot explain: There is, first of all, the inclusion of the play in the Folio, for, in spite of the fact that there are included plays which we now agree are 'doubtful,' we have no other example of the inclusion of a play which Heminge and Condell must have known to have been in no way the work of Shakespeare. There is, secondly, the reason for the writing of a second play. Even Boyle does not doubt that the *Henry the Eighth* which was being performed at the time of the Globe fire was Shakespeare's. His theory is that the present play was written to take the place of one destroyed at that time. This, however, is open to the serious objections that there is no more reason to suppose that the prompter's copy was lost than that it was saved, and that the play was already being acted, so that no new copy was necessary for the actors, while a new one

⁶ *New Shakespeare Society's Transactions*, 1880-5, p. 444.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

could certainly have been made from their dictation if the prompter's copy had been lost, and, chief of all, that Shakespeare himself was alive at the time of the fire, so that there would hardly have been any need of calling on Massinger to rewrite his play! Thirdly, Boyle's theory does not in any way explain that very thing which caused Boyle's investigation—the lack of consistency in the play. He declares throughout that Massinger and Fletcher worked together on the play, yet pauses continually to show that Fletcher disregards hints which Massinger has given, that whole scenes are out of place, and that there is an utter lack of continuity in character development. Minor tests, moreover, such as Thorndike's 'them-'em' test go to prove the impossibility of Massinger's collaboration; in the seven plays of Massinger which Thorndike examined, Massinger used the word 'them' two hundred times and the contraction not at all, while in this one play alone, the scenes which Boyle would assign to Massinger contain seventeen cases of the contraction to eighteen of the full word—an incredible difference.

A study of sources of the play throws little real light upon the problem of authorship, but it does raise one point which may be significant. The chief source for the material used in the first four acts was the second edition of Holinshed's *Chronicle*, while practically all of the last act is founded upon Foxe's *Actes and Monuments of the Churche*. It is possible that Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* may have been available since, although the book was not published until 1641, it was circulated in manuscript during Shakespeare's lifetime; it seems much more probable, however, that the authors did not consult this directly but used only such passages as Holinshed had included. Edward Hall's *Chronicle* seems also to have been used occasionally. If we accept for the time being the division of scenes made by Spedding, we find that in the Shakespearean portions there are fourteen direct borrowings from Holinshed; three from Foxe; one from Hall; two which may be from Cavendish or Holinshed. Fletcher has ten from Holinshed, two from Hall, four from

Foxe, four which may be from Cavendish or Holinshed. In all, there are approximately twenty in the Shakespearean scenes and the same number in the Fletcherian. The interesting thing is that in no other play of Shakespeare's are the borrowings more pronounced than in this, and in no play have the historical passages been so little revised. Both authors have simply versified long passages from the chronicles; even such a speech as the famous defence of Katherine is to be found almost verbatim in Holinshed. The historical material, moreover, has been handled with even more than Shakespeare's usual freedom. The play covers a period of twenty four years; the events are represented as happening on seven days. The chronological sequence has been violated frequently, and in some cases there is a compression of several great events into one scene. Four characters have been added to those of history, but they are all minor: the porter and Patience, who appear in the Fletcherian scenes; the Old Lady, and possibly Brandon, who appear in the Shakespearean. There is none of that prodigality of invention of minor characters to which we are accustomed in the earlier history plays of Shakespeare—nothing to suggest that band of rogues and drunkards and tattered soldiers who surrounded Falstaff; nothing to suggest those myriads of servants in the delineation of whom the dramatist delighted; there is, in the minor characters, but one suggestion of the Shakespeare we know—in the Old Lady, who, lightly sketched though she is, has about her that canniness, that shrewd materialism which delights us in Juliet's nurse. There has been in this play no piling up of fictitious incidents, in addition to the historical events, such as we have seen in the earlier *Henry* plays; only two incidents here have not been taken directly from the chronicles: the meeting of Anne Bullen and Henry at the Cardinal's masque, and the Cardinal's fatal mistake in sending to the king a paper on which was a statement of his private wealth. The only conclusion, then, to which a study of the sources leads us is that, if part of *Henry the Eighth* was written by Shake-

sppeare, he showed himself less original than usual in his versifying of the chronicles, and even less careful than usual in his treatment of the historical chronology of events. Any theory of authorship which may be proposed must take that into account. It must also take into account the very serious consideration that, if this play is in any way Shakespeare's, it is the last that we have from his pen, and yet it must be evident to even a casual reader that it is, in every way, below the level of much of even his earliest work. In spite of all these things, however, I still venture to say that it *is* Shakespeare's in part, and that, properly understood, it is less an anticlimax than a fitting climax to his dramas.

First of all, is there any reason for Shakespeare's interest in such a subject at this time? It is hardly necessary to say that, if the original plan of the play was his, Shakespeare was not intending here a 'history play' as history plays were understood before 1600. This was not by any means the first play upon a subject connected with the reign of Henry VIII. Shakespeare's company had already produced two plays dealing with Thomas Cromwell and with Sir Thomas More. In the Stationer's Register, under the date February 12, 1604-5 there is a memorandum relative to a play called the *Enterlude of K. Henry 8th*, which has been identified with Rowley's *When You See Me You Know Me*. In 1605 there had appeared a spectacular production, exhibiting some of the events of Queen Elizabeth's early life and coronation, with a sequel celebrating the activity of London merchants and the foundation of the Royal Exchange—Thomas Heywood's *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*. Besides these, the Admiral's company had produced in 1601-2 two plays about Wolsey, the first called the *Life*, the second, the *Rising of the Cardinal*. It does not seem to have been generally noticed that there was a pronounced revival of interest in these plays during the year 1613, possibly on account of the festivities attendant on the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth. *The History of Thomas Lord Cromwell* was reissued during that year, with the statement on its title page that

it was 'written by W. S.'; *When You See Me, You Know Me* reappeared in 1613, as did also the first part of *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*. In addition to this, during the spring of that same year when the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth was celebrated there were produced no fewer than six Shakespearean plays. Whatever the cause of the revival of interest, we may see here an economic reason why the Globe Theatre should have desired a play on the subject of the reign of Henry and why Shakespeare should have been the one to write it. We have no reason to suppose that Shakespeare's removal to Stratford would have caused him to lose that shrewd knowledge of the London theatre he had always had. It is, therefore, not difficult to believe that, either because the managers of the Globe asked it, or because he himself, with his usual business acumen, saw the possibilities, he turned during that spring to the chronicles dealing with the reign of Henry the Eighth and drafted a play on the subject.

The question then is: what was that draft? What was it that Shakespeare had in mind when he set about the play which he never finished? Our own opinions of the play are so biased by the distorted version that we read that it is difficult for us to forget what Fletcher did to Wolsey and Katherine and Henry and Anne, yet that is exactly what must be done is we are to see what the play was to Shakespeare. If we accept the division of scenes made by Spedding and turn to the reading of the original play, we may, I think, by the simple device of reading the Shakespearean scenes apart from the others see what that idea was, and we will find that it was less a companion for such a play as *Henry the Fifth*—as has been suggested—than for a *Timon of Athens* or a *Lear*. In attempting any such reconstruction of the original play, it is essential to remember always that the act, as a unit, was apparently nothing to Shakespeare; that he wrote, except in the one or two cases in which he actually imitated the classical dramatists, not a five act play, but a succession of scenes; that his plays, as a rule, divide them-

selves into two parts, following the device of the popular drama before his time which was frequently concerned with the life and death or the rise and fall of a real or fictitious character. Sometimes, as we know, he himself marks for us the beginning of the second part, either by an actual figure such as that of Time in *The Winter's Tale* or by a device such as that of the witches in *Macbeth*. Usually the events of the second part balance those of the first part; always one will be seen to be a rising, the other a falling action. It is evident, also, that in any play which is Shakespeare's we may expect to find a striking use of his two favorite devices of repetition and contrast—repetition of the main idea in plots and sub-plots; repetitions of incidents and characters to bring out other incidents and other characters; sudden sharp contrasts of scenes and characters and situations. All of these devices I think we may find in even that part of *Henry the Eighth* which he wrote; and when we have observed them, we shall perhaps see the reason why he did not conclude it, and why Fletcher, when he set to work on it, completed it as he did.

In reading Holinshed and the various other chroniclers, there was one thing about the period of Henry the Eighth which could not fail to impress Shakespeare, as it has impressed readers ever since his time: the tremendous reversals of fortune which characterized the individuals of that period. Buckingham, Wolsey, Katherine, Cranmer, Anne, Cromwell—where in one period would one find more characters who, through one man, the King, rose to greater heights or fell to more definite misery? Whether we look upon the Shakespeare of 1613 as the dramatist of human disillusionment, or merely as the dramatist who, more than any other, delighted in sharp contrasts, we can see why the reign of Henry should have seized upon his imagination. If, then, we omit entirely the Fletcherian scenes and consider only the story and the characters which Shakespeare actually introduces, we shall see what his plan was.

In that first abrupt scene, in the midst of a conversation between Buckingham and Norfolk in regard to that 'sun of Glory,' 'that light of men,' Henry the King, the splendor of whose meeting with the king of France is occupying all minds, reference is made almost at once, with great dramatic effect, to the man who is evidently the power behind the English throne—to the 'right reverend' Cardinal Wolsey. At once Buckingham's anger flares up,

The devil speed him! no man's pie is freed
From his ambitious finger.

'His pride,' another character says, 'peeps through each part of him.' Not pride and ambition alone, for we are told also of his malice and 'potency,' that his nature is revengeful and his sword is sharp. At that moment there enters the Cardinal himself and sweeps across the stage, his eye fixed 'with disdain' on Buckingham, who looks at him with equal disdain. From the beginning Shakespeare leaves us in no doubt in regard to Wolsey. The Cardinal threatens, even in this momentary appearance, that Buckingham shall lessen that big look' and before even this short scene is over, we are given an opportunity of seeing how well the Cardinal keeps his promises. Buckingham's taunts that 'the butcher's cur is venom mouthed,' his names, 'this fox,' 'this wolf,' this 'cunning cardinal' follow him. In vain does Norfolk counsel that 'temperance' which Buckingham so evidently lacks. But that Buckingham's suspicions are well founded is shown by his almost instant arrest for high treason; thus he, who has shown himself loyal to his king is, with his friends, caught as he says 'in the net' and goes to the Tower with the words,

I am the shadow of poor Buckingham
Whose figure even this instant cloud puts on
By darkening my clear sun.

So ends the first scene. The second follows at once—a council chamber, Henry entering leaning on the shoulder of the Cardinal, clearly from his first speech under the influence of the Cardinal, turning from him only at the

entrance of Katherine, who, kneeling, pleads to no avail for Buckingham. Wolsey has succeeded in deceiving the king, but has not deceived Katherine. She charges him with being back of the trouble which stirs the country to revolt, she brings before the king his unjust taxation—a charge which he turns aside with his cunning subtlety and at once manages to make seem in his favor. Katherine's accusation has no effect other than to make Wolsey realize that in her he has a dangerous enemy. There follows the accusation of Buckingham, throughout which, it is to be noticed, Shakespeare shows Henry as persuaded by the Cardinal against his better judgment—Henry, in Shakespeare's hands is never bad; he is a weakling who is easily ruled by the keen intellect of the greater man. Most of all, however, the dramatist shows in Katherine a combination of those characteristics which we have learned to expect in the great women of Shakespeare: fearlessness, courage, steadfastness, keen judgment. The scene which follows, though presupposing others, is yet clear in itself—another of those swift reversals of fortune in which Shakespeare delighted. We have but seen Katherine at her height; we hear of her as one cast off by the king, and the news comes through the young lady-in-waiting who is to take her place, through Anne Bullen whom Shakespeare in this scene draws as a simple youthful attractive girl of the group of the youthful Portia and the youthful Juliet—the sort of character he delighted to portray. He shows her dwelling on the tragedy of the queen and showing that moderation of which the best Shakespearean characters are always exponents:

Verily,
I swear tis better to be lowly born
And range with humble livers in content
Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief
And wear a golden sorrow.

She has hardly had time to exclaim emphatically,

By my troth and maidenhead
I would not be a queen,

when there enters the Lord Chamberlain with the announcement that the king has created her Marchioness of Pembroke. The announcement, the derisive cacklings of the old lady, fail to move the girl in the least, for, like Katherine and Shakespeare's women in general, Anne has a level head. As Juliet in the midst of the emotion of the balcony scene could say,

But yet I have no joy of this contract tonight,
It is too rash, too sudden, too unadvised,

so Anne declares,

Would I had no being
If this salute my blood a jot; it faints me
To think what follows.

And at once, with a touch which is worthy of Shakespeare, she remembers her who has been a queen and is to be no longer,

The queen is comfortless and we forgetful
In our long absence; pray do not deliver
What here you've heard to her.

Another scene, and we are once more at a trial, but with a difference. She who was, by the king's own word, coequal with him at the trial of Buckingham, is now arraigned; she who knelt before the king to sue for Buckingham, now kneels to sue for herself. Close beside the king throughout is Wolsey. It is Katherine alone who dares to charge the Cardinal with being the instigator of the whole affair, who dares to say that he pretends to be humble but his heart is 'crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride.' Shakespeare leaves us in no doubt as to the king's real feeling for Katherine, for as she leaves, he says:

Go thy ways, Kate;
The man in the world who shall report he has
A better wife, let him in naught be trusted,
For speaking false in that; thou art, alone,
If thy rare qualitties, sweet gentleness,
Thy meekness saint-like, wife-like government,
Obeying in commanding, and thy parts
Sovereign and pious else, could speak thee out
The queen of earthly queens.

Wolsey, perceiving the king's emotion, and fearful lest that lead him to interfere with his deep-laid plans, craftily calls upon the sovereign there in public to declare whether Katherine's charges are true. At this the king speaks, revealing to the audience the way in which, as in *Othello*, the crafty man of intellect has worked upon the man of emotion. No one can read the long defense of Henry and fail to notice the repetition of the word *conscience* which throughout the play comes in like a refrain—'the respite shook the bosom of my conscience,' he says, and again, 'thus hulling in the wild sea of my conscience,' and finally, 'I mean to rectify my conscience.' It is easy to see the way in which Wolsey has been acting upon the king. It is another phase of this same weakness on the part of the king which, captivated by youthful Anne, led to his creation of the Marchioness of Pembroke, and which now, affected by Katherine, leads him to declare,

Prove but our marriage lawful, by my life.
And kingly dignity, we are content
To wear our mortal state to come with her,
Katherine our queen, before the primest creature
That's paragoned i' the world.

And then, as the court is adjourned, the king utters a significant remark, mentioning a name which until this time has not been used:

My learned and well-beloved servant, Cranmer,
Prithee return; with thy approach I know
My comfort comes along.

Packed into the next scene we find many things: the nobles warn that the fall of Wolsey is imminent; Katherine has already been set aside; Anne Bullen is the king's favorite, rumor says already his wife. Cranmer is mentioned again, this time as the coming man of the kingdom, the future archbishop; Wolsey, entering, shows us at once that his many lines have become entangled. He had thought that the divorce of Katherine would be the climax of his plots, but now he finds himself balked by the king's infatu-

ation for Anne, by his evident intention of marrying her instead of the sister of the French king, as Wolsey had planned. At just this moment there appears the king who has found by chance the incriminating papers; like all weaklings who have been under the domination of stronger men, his intolerance and scorn are all the more bitter now that he has found out the crimes of his erstwhile favorite. He flings the incriminating paper at the Cardinal and sweeps out, leaving him alone. When Shakespeare had reached that point in the scene, he stopped; the rest of it—the famous charge of Wolsey to Cromwell (a very different Wolsey from Shakspeare's) is Fletcher's.

That, in the Shakespearean play, was doubtless to have been the end of the first part—the climax of the play. What was to constitute the second part has already been suggested in the continued references to Cranmer—it was to have shown the rise of Cranmer to the position of the chief counsellor of the king, the culmination of which, the turning of the King against Cranmer as he earlier turned against Wolsey, Shakespeare has shown in the one remaining scene which he wrote, in which he suggests that Cranmer has already risen to his height and is now about to fall. That scene, which Fletcher combined with the scene dealing with the birth of Anne's daughter, has always troubled critics who could find in the play which Fletcher made no use for the character of Cranmer except as the godfather of the infant Elizabeth, and who failed to see any reason for introducing the scene in which his possible treason is discussed. But we cannot read the scenes which Shakespeare wrote and fail to see that from the first Cranmer has been suggested as the coming important character, and that in the scene in which the nobles prophesy the fall of Wolsey, they prophesy with equal force the rise of Cranmer.

That is the original play. Did Fletcher add anything in the way of plot? I think not. He wrote the meeting of Anne and Henry, but that had already been suggested in the scenes which we have read; he wrote the farewell of Buck-

ingham, the death of Katherine, the farewell of Wolsey—all of them completing scenes which had already been written,—the elevation of Cranmer, which was both anticipated and concluded by Shakespeare, the visit of the cardinals to Katherine, and the three scenes of pageantry—exactly the sort of scenes in which Fletcher always delighted. Shakespeare's work was introductory; he brought no scene to its conclusion. Fletcher's was entirely founded upon the parts already written; he began no new story in the play. Did the two authors, then, collaborate? Clearly they did not. Apart from the fact that we can find no case in which the later Shakespeare ever collaborated with anyone, the play itself solves that problem. Shakespeare wrote no one of the 'big scenes.' Moreover, in the case of each of the major characters, there is, in the final scene, an entire contradiction of the character as Shakespeare planned it. Thus Fletcher has sentimentalized the death of Buckingham; he has given us the dying dream of Katherine; Wolsey's complete change of character in his farewell to Cromwell, which in every sentence contradicts the character of Wolsey as Shakespeare painted it; he has even suggested the death of Wolsey which he could not show, telling us how, 'an old man broken with the storm of years, he came to beg a little earth for charity.' There is no one character in the play which we have today which can be said to be consistent. This could not possibly have occurred had the two authors been working together. What must have happened, clearly, is that Shakespeare, after he had blocked out the six scenes which we have today, gave up the idea of working on the play. But since, as has already been said, a play on the subject was an economic necessity, either Shakespeare himself, or the managers of the Globe theatre, with his consent, gave the rough draft to another author. Fletcher, since 1607, had been gradually coming to fill Shakespeare's place and would seem to have been the most popular dramatist with the public of the time; what more natural than that he should have been the one to complete the play?

That the draft was given to him with Shakespeare's consent seems evident, since the play was to be presented within the year and Shakespeare would certainly be in a position to know that it was his play which was being used. It is possible that he outlined to Fletcher his original intention; on the other hand he may simply have given him the draft of the six scenes and referred him to the chronicles which he had used, which Fletcher evidently used throughout. At all events, it is clear that Fletcher did not in any way carry out Shakespeare's original intention; Shakespeare must have known that he would not.

And now what, in the main, was that intention and why did Shakespeare himself not carry it out? The answer to one question is, I think, contained in the other; the answer to both is to be found in the play itself. The play was not to have been, as now, a collection of disorganized episodes; it was not, as has always been suggested, to culminate in the separation of the Anglican and Roman churches; that misunderstanding has arisen from various references in the Fletcherian scenes; in the parts which I have called Shakespearean, there are only three references of any sort to the Church, and those three are entirely subsidiary; the most serious of them is Wolsey's remark that Anne was a 'spleeny Lutheran'; apart from that there is nothing to suggest that Shakespeare was interested, in the slightest degree, in the question of religion. The theme is given, I believe, in the sub-title, *All Is True*, by which the play was known at the time of the burning of the Globe. It occurs again in those lines which Fletcher included in the prologue—that prologue which suits the original play so much better than the play which we now have:

think you see them great
And followed with the general throng and sweat
Of thousand friends; then in a moment see
How soon that mightiness meets misery.

Those who hold to the theory of the 'period of disillusion' will find here a suggestion that Shakespeare at this time

understood thoroughly the meaning of those lines; whether we accept that idea or not, it must be clear that the original play was in no way distant from the other great plays of the last period. We have here the framework of a play which was to deal with the buffets and rewards of fortune—with that chance which at one time exalts a man and at another time casts him down—with characters who bear in themselves the seeds of their own misery—with the strange revolutions of fortune which now exalt one, now another. And in its succession of scenes of exaltation and misery, it does not fall below any of the great dramas, and is, indeed, reminiscent of many of them. Particularly in its rapid succession of rising and falling characters, in its suggestion of Nemesis, its balancing of parts and episodes is this latest of the history plays reminiscent of that early Richard III. Buckingham, headstrong, impetuous, refusing to listen to the counsel of 'moderation,' daring to do what he considers honorable—falling by those very characteristics which make him attractive—even in the one scene in which he appears has much of Hotspur; his death, in Shakespeare's hands would have been no long-drawn sentimental funeral scene, but a brief moment in which the encomium, if one there was, would have been pronounced not by himself but by another Hal. Shakespeare's Katherine has in her much of the later Portia, more of Hermione, the simplicity and courageousness of all of Shakespeare's women; if Shakespeare ever attended a performance of the completed play, he must have smiled a little as the Katherine he knew went through the long-drawn dream and death scene which delighted Fletcher. Henry the King is, in Shakespeare's hands a popular idol, the 'sun of men' the 'glory of the world,' but in reality weak and ineffectual, entirely under the domination of those around him; Shakespeare makes him weak not only in politics but in love; it is no villain who lays his plans skilfully to rid himself of Katherine, but a very human being who is one day attracted by a pretty face, and another day sincerely devoted to the wife whom con-

science bids him cast away; that study of the conscience of a king, worked upon subtly by a keener intellect, would have been a tremendous thing in Shakespeare's hands. Most of all it is Wolsey we would have cared to see—Wolsey as Shakespeare saw him, for he is the supreme character of the play; a later Iago, he has all the cunning and the craft of Iago, but he has, more than that, big ends in view; he is the supreme power in England; in his hands there lie her destinies; far-sighted, shrewd, an intellect incarnate, he is the last of that great group of whom Don John was first—'determined to prove a villain' but a great villain. The first part of the play we may construct almost in its entirety, and there is no reason to believe that the second part would have fallen off, though we have little of it left. Buckingham at his height and realizing his doom; Katherine at her height as he falls, with Wolsey malevolently in the background plotting her downfall and his own rise; Anne rising to take the place of Katherine, and to complicate the situation for Wolsey, yet shuddering in the midst of her splendor to think what follows; Wolsey at his height, with Cranmer's name in the king's mouth; in the last part, the overthrow of Wolsey and the rise of Cranmer; possibly the fate of Anne—even perhaps the story of Cromwell which has been merely suggested, and through it all, through the fate which comes alike to good and evil, through the tale of Wolsey falling by his ambition, even as Macbeth, and Katherine falling in spite of all her virtue, as Juliet or Cordelia,—as the thread upon which all hangs, Henry himself, weak, easily led, perhaps pursued throughout by that conscience of which he speaks so frequently.

Why, then, did Shakespeare not finish the drama which, it must seem to us, might have been one of the most tremendous of all in its sharp contrast of light and shade, in the inevitability of its conclusions? Shakespeare and his people were very near in time to these people of whom they wrote, too near, perhaps, to criticise them with impunity. With fictitious characters it could have been done; with

real characters, it is doubtful if the play-going Englishmen of 1613 would have accepted it—as perhaps the playgoing Englishmen of today would not accept a Bernard Shaw delineation of Victoria and her court! Whether they would have objected to the picture which Shakespeare drew or not, it is at all events certain that the taste of the playgoers of the time had changed; what they wanted now was not the ‘dry light’ in which Shakespeare would have shown them the earlier court, but the haze of sentiment which Fletcher knew so well how to spread over his characters—which the playgoing public of our own day seems more and more to crave. That this is true may be seen by what Fletcher did to the Shakespearean characters; in his scenes the bitterness and unequalness of fate is gone; with Fletcher, as with the popular dramatists of our own day, the bad are always punished, the good usually rewarded, or, if that is impossible, at least given death scenes which cause the eye to flow; and all, good and bad, are shown as regenerated at the last moment, and departing this life in the odor of sanctity and the pomp of oratory. Thus all the characters in *Henry the Eighth* are shown as truly great only when the external greatness is stripped from them; and since this could not be done with any consistency in the play as Shakespeare planned had it, Fletcher has covered up all the rough places with pageantry and visions and coronations and christenings, and has risen to heights which still hold enthralled the audience which loves oratory, and spectacles, and sentiment, and tears. For Fletcher was, to use Christopher Morley’s apt term, the ‘Pollyanias’ of his day—and his day, like our own, loved a Pollyanias. One would give much to have seen Shakespeare the day he attended the performance of *Henry the Eighth* or *All Is True*.

If there is anything at all to this supposition, it throws an interesting light not only upon Shakespeare’s methods but also upon his point of view in those last years of which we know so little. We can see something of the workman here—we can watch him as he writes the pivotal scenes,

the ones which are the crisis of each plot, leaving the others to be sketched in later; we can watch him stress those characteristics on which he is to dwell later; we can see that he took the chronicles, and with the passages before him, simply turned them into blank verse, intending later to polish them, as he did in earlier plays. The result is that even in the scenes we have we find that every important event has been mentioned, every character delineated, the whole story told us, either in prospect or in retrospect. And we can see, moreover, that, having blocked out the whole play as it was to have been, he definitely put it aside and gave it for completion to a man who would not complete it as it had been begun. Nothing could be more significant of the point of view of the dramatist of the time. His public no longer wanted the impersonality, the impassivity, the moderation of Shakespeare; they wanted the morals, the sentiment, the hazy mist of Fletcher; they liked Fletcher and they wanted Fletcher. They would not have liked the Wolsey Shakespeare knew.

Perhaps nothing more definite can be determined unless we come upon new evidence in records of the time, for the problems of *Henry the Eighth*, as was said at the beginning, are in many ways different from those of the other doubtful Shakespearean plays. So far as external evidence is concerned, the problem is not so interesting nor so important as that in any other of the doubtful plays; so far as the dramatist himself is concerned, it seems to me much more important, for here we may perhaps find something of the craftsman, the dramatist and the poet.

MARJORIE H. NICOLSON